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SMU's pioneering pedagogy, SMU-X, recognised globally for innovation, creativity and impact

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Press Release

SMU's pioneering pedagogy, SMU-X, recognised globally for innovation, creativity and impact

University also awarded S\$152,000 Tertiary Education Research Fund grant to conduct two-year study

Singapore, 7 March 2016 (Monday) – Singapore Management University (SMU)'s innovative pedagogy, SMU-X, has been lauded by global accreditation body AACSB International (AACSB) as an 'innovation that inspires'. It is one of the 30 award-winning innovations that stood out from more than 300 submissions received from over 200 institutions across 35 countries. SMU is the only institution in Singapore, and one of three in Asia to be recognised in AACSB's inaugural 'Innovations That Inspire' initiative.

The accolade commends and affirms AACSB member schools for their efforts in innovating and diversifying the global business education environment, and for making a positive impact on society. In particular, AACSB recognised SMU's exemplary efforts for innovations in the 'pedagogy and learning' category.

This international accolade comes close on the heels of strong support that the University has received from the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) for SMU-X. The SMU-X pedagogical approach to prepare students with future work skills was awarded a S\$152,000 Tertiary Education Research Fund (TRF) grant in November 2015. The grant is awarded on a competitive basis and supports applied educational research across the institutions of higher learning in Singapore. SMU-X was also shortlisted for the Wharton-Quacquarelli Symonds Stars Reimagine Education Awards 2015 held in the United States in December 2015.

About SMU's award-winning SMU-X initiative

SMU launched the SMU-X initiative in 2015 following three-and-a-half years of study and conceptualisation. Through SMU-X, the University introduced across all its six Schools innovative and fresh curriculum that is multi-disciplinary and hands-on, and also created unconventional, flexible spaces for 24/7 use that meet the usage patterns and behaviours of the millennial student.

Four key principles characterise all SMU-X courses: (i) inter-disciplinary content and activities; (ii) experiential learning via an actual problem/issue faced by an organisation; (iii) active student-mentoring by faculty and industry; and (iv) three-way learning by faculty, student and partner organisation, in the form of a tripartite sharing forum at the end of the course.

For the undergraduates, every SMU-X course combines academic with experiential learning through the heavy use of projects to challenge and inspire them to use their disciplinary knowledge and skills in tackling actual multi-disciplinary problems faced by partner companies. SMU-X courses therefore not only accelerate students' learning beyond hypothetical classroom exercises, but also give them the opportunity to bring value to businesses. In the process, the University's ties with the business community are also strengthened.

William H. Glick, chair of the AACSB Board of Directors and Dean of the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University, said, “This year’s inaugural ‘Innovations That Inspire’ initiative has highlighted the tremendous, trailblazing power of AACSB’s member schools, and the value that they place on innovative and meaningful ideas. We are proud to spotlight the Singapore Management University’s innovation, as the ideas found within demonstrates how institutions are embracing out-of-the-box thinking – creating global solutions that shape best practices, form new business ties, and improve the educational experience for students and faculty alike.”

SMU Provost, Professor Lily Kong, said, “It is a great honour to be recognised by AACSB International for our efforts in keeping pace with the needs of the millennial student. The millennial student values versatility, flexibility and meaning in his/her work, and is confident and technologically-savvy. SMU-X is very well suited to the millennial student who is not looking to sit in a classroom for three hours listening to an instructor. The hands-on nature of the projects, the interface with the real world, the solving of actual problems in the public, private or people sectors, the flexibility of learning from an industry mentor paired with the ability to turn to a professor for advice as well as learning from peers in the group project, the opportunity to work and learn at all hours of the day and night in 24/7 facilities ... all these make SMU-X responsive to the learning styles and motivations of the millennial student.”

Impact of SMU-X courses

In 2015, SMU successfully ran 12 pilot SMU-X courses, where 600 participating students worked in projects with 56 organisations from the private, public and NGO sectors. The feedback received from this pioneer group of students showed that their experience was positive:

- More than 80 per cent agreed that the SMU-X course they had taken had enhanced their analytical, reasoning, problem solving and communication skills.
- Nearly 80 per cent agreed that SMU-X courses had increased their preparedness for the working world.
- One in three indicated that they are likely to work in a similar industry as the company they worked with in an SMU-X course.

By applying the four SMU-X principles in every SMU-X course, several future work skills, such as critical and inventive thinking, global awareness and cross-cultural skills, may be inculcated in the learning process. With the MOE TRF grant, SMU will undertake a two-year study on the effectiveness of the SMU-X pilot courses. This will help to further strengthen the positive impact of this pedagogy to benefit students, faculty and partner organisations.

Professor Lily Kong said, “When SMU was first set up, it departed from established practice in Singapore and emphasised small-group seminars and the accompanying interactive pedagogy throughout the university, as distinct from impersonal large lecture classes. The University continues to innovate to respond to changing learning styles and habits. Thus, SMU faculty members have developed international award-winning apps and games to make learning fun and to respond to the digital natives of the millennial generation.”

“Similarly, SMU-X is another innovation that recognises the value of experiential learning, where the distance between the classroom and the real world is immediately diminished if not eradicated. This pedagogy further brings us closer to industry, and industry partners appreciate the fresh perspectives to business problems that they face and the opportunity to talent scout for potential hires. Additionally, through the partnerships, SMU faculty gained research ideas and support,” she added.

Future Plans

In 2016, the University plans to offer to its undergraduates another 15 SMU-X courses to bring the total course offering to more than 25 by the end of the year. About 2,000 students and about 100 partners are expected to benefit from the opportunity. Looking ahead, SMU plans to progressively ramp up our SMU-X course offerings and aim to, by 2017, provide opportunities for all students to take at least one SMU-X course as part of their undergraduate programme.

- End -

Enclosures/more information

- Annex 1: Quotes from partners and student
- Annex 2: List of SMU-X courses offered in 2015 and 2016.
- For more information on the MOE TRF grant award, pls visit:
<http://research.smu.edu.sg/news/2016/01/27/moe-tertiary-education-research-fund-grant-award>
- For more information on the *Innovations That Inspire* award, pls visit:
www.AACSB.edu/Innovations-That-Inspire

About SMU

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning, and for its technologically enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Home to around 9,300 undergraduate, postgraduate, executive and professional, full- and part-time students, SMU is comprised of six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector, through its research institutes, centres and labs. SMU's city campus is a state-of-the art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

About AACSB International

Founded in 1916, AACSB is an association of more than 1,450 educational institutions, businesses, and other organizations in 90 countries and territories. AACSB's mission is to advance quality management education worldwide through accreditation, thought leadership, and value-added services. As the premier accreditation body for institutions offering undergraduate, master's, and doctorate degrees in business and accounting, AACSB offers a wide array of services to the management education industry. AACSB's global headquarters is located in Tampa, Florida, USA; its Asia Pacific headquarters is located in Singapore; and its Europe, Middle East, and Africa headquarters is located in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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Annex 1: Quotes from partner and SMU student

Quote from Partner – Skyscanner

- “We have an on-going relationship with SMU through our intern and graduate programme, but this is the first time that we have worked with SMU on a project such as this. Through the various interactions with the students, we were very impressed with the quality of thinking and maturity in grasping the case study and applying classroom learning to a real-life business challenges. The questions they had around our business and operations, and their resulting projects, sparked great discourse and discussion with our team, and a number of strategies and ideas in their projects were aligned to how we are already operating. The whole experience also brought us a step closer to learning about and identifying talent at SMU.”
- Mr Ravish Doctor, Manager, Growth Strategy, Skyscanner
- Skyscanner, a leading global travel search site, was one of the companies which collaborated in ‘The Design of Business’ course in 2015.

Quote from Partner – DFS Venture Singapore Pte Ltd

- "As the world's leading luxury travel retailer, DFS takes great pride in delivering exceptional service to our customers. Collaborating with SMU students and their professors in carrying out projects related to the establishment of an intelligent accounting function represents a unique opportunity for DFS to further enhance the customer experience... In terms of expectations, I think the students have met it to quite a high level.”
- Mr Gurbinder Singh, Vice President, Global Finance, DFS Venture Singapore Pte Ltd
- DFS was the first partner company to co-create an SMU-X course (Intelligent Accounting Function) with our faculty members. SMU’s student project teams looked at technical-based solutions for DFS, such as coming up with a balanced scorecard to help measure the effectiveness of DFS’ finance function, mentored by six senior DFS staff. In 2016, there will be a re-run of the above course. Additionally, DFS is also collaborating with SMU on a second course this year.

Quote from SMU student:

- Cheng Li Yang, 4th year Economics student, took the *Global Migration & Human Security* course offered by the School of Social Sciences in 2015.
- “The course was about migration patterns across the world, and the politics and international relations behind it; it was also about a project that actively contributes to a community of refugees in Thailand. I chose that course because it offered a prospect for active contribution to what we were studying. It was an extremely amazing experience visiting the refugee camp, but it was not the complete highlight of the module – what was most interesting was the crafting out real-life solutions to real-life problems that these refugees face, and the best part is being part of the solution.

Real-life is so much more dynamic than a static classroom setting... we had to improvise, and really go onto the ground and experience what we would not be able to in class. I think the students in the class pushed it a step further when we coordinated a trip to Huaymalai to have a look for ourselves about our beneficiaries and who were helping. In the process, we managed to

secure a visit into a refugee camp in Thailand and that really opened our eyes. In a way, we wanted to make full use of our presence there in Huaymalai, and we gathered as much data as we could to continue supporting that community in whatever way we can. The class was also diverse – we had law, information systems, social sciences and economics students joining in this endeavour. It was really exciting to work with such a diverse team.

I loved how we had no concrete structure to our learning, and every day was a learning experience on its own. The things that we've experienced so far, are rarely felt through texts and a static classroom experience."

Annex 2A: List of pilot SMU-X courses

Year	Offered at	SMU-X Course Title	Instructor Name
Jan 2015	Lee Kong Chian School of Business	1. Managing Process Improvement	Associate Professor Lieven Demesster
	School of Social Sciences	2. Public Policy Taskforce	Assistant Professor Ijlal Naqvi
Aug 2015	Lee Kong Chian School of Business	3. The Design of Business	Senior Lecturer Rick Smith
	School of Accountancy	4. Internal Audit	Associate Professor Foo See Liang
		5. Intelligent Accounting Function	Associate Professor Gary Pan & Professor Venky Shankararaman
	School of Information Systems	6. IS Application Project	Associate Professor Benjamin Gan
		7. Managing IS for Business Value	Adjunct Faculty Annie Ng
	School of Social Sciences	8. Global Migration and Human Security	Assistant Professor Song Jiyoung
		9. Special Projects with International Organisations	Assistant Professor Song Jiyoung
		10. Subjective Well-being: The Science of Happiness	Associate Professor Christie Scollon
		11. Postmodern Theatre Studies	Associate Professor Margaret Chan
		12. Public Policy Taskforce	Assistant Professor Ijlal Naqvi

Annex 2B: SMU-X courses to be offered in 2016

Year	Offer at	SMU-X Course Title	Instructor Name
Jan 2016	Lee Kong Chian School of Business	1. Social Entrepreneurship	Associate Professor Tan Wee Liang
		2. Enterprise Consulting	
		3. Design Thinking and Innovation	Adjunct Faculty Koh Zhixiu
		4. Innovations for Asia's Smart Cities	Professor Thomas Menkhoff
		5. Marketing, branding and Service Excellence in Hospitality Industry	Adjunct Faculty Yasemin Tecmen Stubbe
	School of Accountancy	6. Corporate Advisory	Associate Professor Foo See Liang & Adjunct Faculty Tay Woon Teck
	School of Social Sciences	7. Managing Diversity in Asia	Assistant Professor Hoon Chang Yau and Mr Ho Jack Yong
	School of Information Systems	8. Data Warehousing and Business Analytics	Assistant Professor Swapna Gottipati
		9. Geospatial Analytics for Business Intelligence	Associate Professor Kam Tin Seong
	School of Law	10. International Moots 2	Assistant Professor Chen Siyuan
Aug 2016	School of Accountancy	11. Accounting Study Mission	Assistant Professor Yuanto Kusnadi
		12. Accounting for Entrepreneurs	
	School of Economics	13. Statistics-X	Senior Lecturer Rosie Ching Ju Mae
	School of Information Systems	14. Social Analytics and Applications	Assistant Professor Kyong Jin Shim
	School of Law	15. International Moots 1	Assistant Professor Chen Siyuan